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ABSTRACT

This report describes a survey conducted by the University of California at Santa Barbara (UCSB) in which a questionnaire was sent to 101 research libraries in order to determine what their policies and practices were with respect to the promotion of user-access to online computerized bibliographic database services. Sixty usable responses were received, and almost all of the responding libraries were providing computer information services to users as a relatively conventional adjunct to normal reference services. The survey addressed two aspects of promotion: perceptions regarding the relative effectiveness of promotional techniques, and perceptions regarding the impacts of promotion on library operations. In addition to copies of the survey questions and a sample promotional brochure, this report provides a list of 14 references. (FM)

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Impacts of the Promotion of Online Services in Academic Libraries

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IR009137

Impacts of Promotion of Online Searching in Academic Libraries

Librarians in the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), library have been conducting online bibliographic searches for several years. However, until very recently, the promotion of these services has been very low-keyed, and essentially limited to informing a small number of specialized people that the services exist. We were concerned that we would not be able to handle the impacts of full-scale promotion on our ability to provide online searches and still maintain the level of patron service in other areas that the library users have become accustomed to. In order to better estimate the impacts of increasing our promotional efforts, we conducted a survey of libraries similar to ours.

A questionnaire was sent to 101 research libraries similar to the UCSB Library, to determine what their policies and practices were with respect to the promotion of user-access to on-line computerized bibliographic database services. Sixty (60) usable responses were received, and almost all of the responding libraries were providing Computer Information Services (CIS) to users as a relatively conventional adjunct to normal references services. It is clear from the responses that the number of searches performed is rising steadily with some university libraries reporting a doubling of requests annually and with a strong gradual rise by nearly all. One medical school reported that in 1971-2 there were 11 requests, and that from January through August 1979 the number was 2,182. This experience is extraordinary, and although the questionnaire did not request information on the number of searches performed per week or month, from statements volunteered it appeared that usually not less than two per week per library searcher was minimal. Several libraries reported that CIS seems to simulate interlibrary loan activity. Most respondents said that more and more library

users expect research libraries to provide computerized bibliographical information services.

There is a lot of literature about the promotion of online services. We conducted a computer search on the ERIC database, in December, 1979, and retrieved thirteen relevant citations to journal articles, ERIC reports, and other documents. A search on LISA, on the same day as the ERIC search, yielded nineteen relevant documents, two of which had also been retrieved from the ERIC search. Of the total of thirty unique citations, fifteen dealt with college or university search services, but even among the others there were ideas and information of interest to college and university librarians.

In 1978, H. B. Paul (1) rather thoroughly reviewed the literature of promotion and publicity for online services. He also discussed the literature about library promotional activities in general and its relevance to the promotion of online services. Paul noted the significance of word-of-mouth in promotional efforts, a theme which recurs over and over in the literature on how to promote online services. Paul's, and the other, documents contained relevant citations that augmented those retrieved from the ERIC and LISA searches. Additional relevant materials were suggested by survey respondents, as indicated later in this paper. However, the value of the ERIC and LISA searches to the authors of this paper cannot be underestimated. Both databases are noted for their in-depth analysis of the literature, allowing the searcher many access points including words in the abstracts. For this particular literature search, the in-depth analysis by the database producers made it possible for the authors to peruse several useful documents that they otherwise would not have known about.

There appears to be almost universal agreement in the literature that promotion is important; indeed necessary. However, one report (2) contains a suggestion that publicity is not of much importance. Lipow (3) and others stress that promotional activities must be educational-- that is, the recipient of a piece of publicity must be informed about what an online search can do for him or her. It must not be assumed that potential clients are aware of any of the significant trade-offs between manual and computer searches.

Hjerppe (4) suggested that there are two different facets to promotional activities that need to be distinguished: a) informing potential users of the existence of the service; and b) persuading them of the value of the service.

Our survey addresses 2 different aspects of promotion: a) perceptions regarding relative effectiveness of techniques of promotion, and b) perceptions regarding impacts of promotion on library operations. We were less interested in gathering statistics than in obtaining ideas and insights from our respondents, many of whom were far more experienced at that time than we were both in providing online searches and in promoting their services. Hence we chose a survey format of open-ended questions, thus allowing our respondents the maximum amount of freedom in expressing themselves.

Two questions we asked directly addressed perceptions regarding the most and least effective techniques of promotion (assuming that promotion is intended to attract users rather than hold them off). These questions are shown in Figure 1.

In many ways, the very perceptive article by Ferguson (5) anticipated most of the responses we received regarding the most effective techniques. It would be interesting to know whether, and to what extent, that reflected the influence Ferguson's article had. It was evident from another question on our survey that the journal Online (in which Ferguson's article appeared) is an

I

WHICH TECHNIQUES OF PROMOTION HAVE YOU FOUND TO BE MOST EFFECTIVE IN INFORMING FACULTY AND STUDENTS ABOUT THE EXISTENCE OF YOUR ONLINE SEARCH SERVICES?

WHICH WERE LEAST EFFECTIVE?

important source of information for a significant portion of our respondents.

Thirty-five respondents specifically identified something called 'Word-of-mouth" as one of the most effective techniques, and no one mentioned it among the least effective techniques. Very few responses to any question in our questionnaire indicated an idea or concept with a comparable level of exposure and consensus. The value of 'Word-of-mouth" publicity is mentioned often in the literature. Ferguson (5) sampled his users and reported that about half of them found out about the service from librarians or friends. Although these are both technically word-of-mouth promotional transactions, it is probably only the latter that most people refer to by that expression.

Patricia Smith (6) notes that an analysis of the market for online services indicates that buyers will tend to "make a special purchasing effort to acquire the services, rather than after comparison shopping or on impulse" and she also points out that in that situation, 'Word-of-mouth" is the most effective form of promotion.

In a paper published in 1973 by Stern, Craig, La Greca, and Lazorick (7) three different approaches for market penetration and other parameters were tested in an academic environment. (See Figure II). The study related to the promotion of SDI services at Ohio State University. The three alternate promotional approaches that were used are described below.

Opinion Leadership: Opinion leaders among the faculty were identified with the help of department chairmen and then marketing efforts were concentrated on these people (mainly via demonstrations). In effect, a 'Word-of-mouth" promotional scheme was initiated. The opinion leaders were also given brochures to pass around.

Blitz: The blitz is described by the authors as resembling "the more typical marketing strategy of an intensive promotion of a particular product

II

1. Opinion Leadership

2. Blitz (by personal letters, brochures, and lectures)

3. Telephone Solicitation

Reported by Louis W. Stern, C. Samuel Craig, Anthony J. La Greca, and Gerald J. Lazorick. "Promotion of Information Services: An Evaluation of Alternative Approaches." J. Am. Soc. Inf. Sci., 24: 171-9 (1973).

or service," and included personalized letters to each member of the department, each letter accompanied by a brochure and a return card; presentation at faculty meetings; and flyers in faculty mailboxes a month after the letters were sent.

Telephone Solicitation: Faculty members were individually phoned and invited to participate.

Control of the experiment was exercised by exposing any one department to only one of the three promotional techniques.

The reason that we are spending so much time on someone else's research that was reported seven years ago is that their results appear to contradict the opinion so popular among searchers that "word-of-mouth" is the most effective promotional technique.

Blitz and telephone solicitation resulted in much higher market penetration than opinion leadership. However, the degree of satisfaction of those who did use the service was essentially the same (high) regardless of which technique had attracted them to the service.

Why is there such a difference between what is commonly accepted as fact by practitioners, and the results of what appears to be a carefully executed study? We don't know. Perhaps it is because the study by Stern et. al. dealt with a batch SDI service rather than an online service, but it isn't clear why that should make any difference.

One possible fault with the Stern study is perhaps that by focusing each technique on an exclusive set of departments in one university, an element of bias was introduced that had a greater effect on the outcome than the techniques themselves did. Perhaps the departments chosen for the opinion leadership technique were, by an unfortunate coincidence, the ones least likely to respond positively to an SDI service. We need to have a better profile of the

departments, including such subtle factors as the quality of faculty-library relations and the real eminence of the "opinion leaders". However, the almost uniform satisfaction of users regardless of which technique was used suggests that these were not important factors, although it doesn't eliminate them altogether.

When we suggest word-of-mouth as an effective means of promoting online services, perhaps what we mean is that word-of-mouth helps spread the word for us, possibly better than anything else, while recognizing that much of this word-of-mouth promotion is done by people who were initially attracted to use the service by some positive promotional activity on the parts of the online searchers and/or the coordinator. Perhaps without positive promotional efforts, word-of-mouth activity by satisfied users will gradually dwindle into insignificance. Atherton and Christian (8) warned that too many librarians rely on word-of-mouth for promotion, and that it is not sufficient.

Recall that the first two questions in our survey explicitly asked about the most effective and least effective promotional methods. The responses supported the value of personal attention to potential users. Many of the more effective techniques involved personal contact, as indicated in Figure III. It is perhaps noteworthy that 4 of the 5 least effective demonstrations were to broad groups. Ferguson (5) stresses the importance of tailoring promotion to the needs of particular groups. It was, of course, necessary for us to interpret many of the responses in order to prepare tables such as that in Figure III. Although someone else might have interpreted a small number of responses differently than we did, we are convinced that this would have made only a slight difference in the numbers in the tables, and that the qualitative conclusions we came to accurately reflect the survey results.

A few rather unique approaches were mentioned by our respondents. Most unique approaches, such as cards in the card catalog, fell in the least effective

III

	Most Effective	Least Effective
Librarians who convince patrons to try a search	8	1
Personal contact through faculty seminars	4	0
Personal contact through student classes	3	0
Mention and explain in library instruction classes	6	0
Lectures without demonstrations	0	1
Orientations	4	1
Demonstrations	34	5

category. One respondent indicated an interesting approach that was effective: placing ads in the campus newspaper containing coupons redeemable before a certain date for a free short search.

Only a few respondents mentioned offering free searches as a promotional technique. This was nearly always successful, and it appears that it is one of the quickest ways to attract large numbers of search requests. However, many libraries may prefer approaches that aim for the attainment of slow steady growth of demand.

Figure IV shows some of the other categories of responses to questions 1 and 2. Unique responses that did not fit well into any of the categories are not shown in the tallies.

The responses support the notion that mailings are more effective if directed to specific audiences. Signs and posters are most effective when they are placed near the corresponding printed publications. Most respondents did not indicate where their signs and posters were placed, but of the total of 15 who mentioned signs and posters, only 8 considered them most effective, and that includes the 4 who placed them near printed sources. There would appear to be little utility in placing ads in campus newspapers. One respondent mentioned advertising on bookmarks as a most effective technique.

The third question on our questionnaire was : "To what extent do you favor the inclusion of information about the cost of online searching in promotional literature?" Results indicated overwhelming opinion in favor of appraising potential users immediately of the approximate costs that might be passed on to them. Many of those who favored the inclusion of cost imformation stated that detailed pricing structures are undesirable, but that average or typical costs should be included. A few of the interesting responses to this question are illustrated in Figure V.

IV

Library Publications	Most Effective	Least Effective
Mailings	13	12
Brochures and handouts	14	11
Other Publications		
In Newsletters	2	3
In library guides	2	0
Articles in campus newspapers	3	8
Signs and Posters		
In general	8	7
If placed on or near printed tools	4	0
Advertisements		
In campus newspapers	0	6

V

"... OMISSION OF AT LEAST A GENERAL COST GUIDELINE CAN LEAD USER TO OVERESTIMATE COST AND NOT BOTHER TO INQUIRE."

"I THINK IT IS ESSENTIAL, BUT IF PRICES ARE HIGH YOU WILL NOT LEARN OF POTENTIAL USERS WHO HAVE BEEN PRICED OUT OF THE MARKET."

"THE DIFFICULTIES ARE THAT COSTS CHANGE, OUTDATING THE LITERATURE, AND THAT THE PRICING STRUCTURE IS FAIRLY COMPLEX AND MAY CONFUSE PATRONS. WE COMPROMISE BY PROVIDING PRICE INFORMATION ON DETAILED LITERATURE BUT NOT ON POSTERS OR OTHER 'GENERAL AWARENESS' MATERIALS."

Question 4 asked: "Do you recommend separate promotional approaches for different groups (e.g. sciences vs. social sciences vs. humanities)?" The majority of responses favored separate approaches. Many of the comments, however, distinguished between different kinds of promotional approaches. For example, five respondents favored separate approaches for demonstrations but not for literature. Others pointed out that the type of approach need not vary, but that different databases and/or examples should be used for different groups.

Most of the remainder of the questionnaire dealt with perceived impacts of promotion. One respondent pointed out that he was not able to correlate apparent impacts in his library with promotional activity because there were no controls. Had any library performed controlled experiments on the impacts of promotion, the responses would have been most highly valued, but none of the respondents indicated that their responses were based on the results of controlled experiments. In fact, we had not expected that any would be, and were frankly looking for perceptions. Many of the individual comments were far more valuable to us than the overall tabulation of statistics that we carried out.

Very little of the literature on the promotion of online services deals with the impacts of promotion. About 6% of the managers who were polled by Wanger (9) expressed concern about the extra workload that an online service might impose, but no one correlated that with promotion. Summit and Firchein (10) reported a concern about work overload by public librarians in connection with the introduction of online search services in several public libraries in the San Francisco Bay area. They indicated that "efforts were made to ascertain the effects of each publicity release" but did not supply detailed statistics that are needed for definitive conclusions about impacts of promotion.

Two questions we asked in which we were seeking general perceptions about the effects of promotion on search activity are shown in Figure VI.

VI

WHAT WAS (OR WERE) THE IMMEDIATE IMPACT(S) OF ANY PROMOTIONAL EFFORTS ON THE NUMBER OF SEARCHES PERFORMED IN YOUR LIBRARY (I.E. ROUGHLY WITHIN THE FIRST MONTH AFTER PROMOTION)?

DO YOU PERCEIVE ANY LONG-RANGE INCREASES IN SEARCHING ACTIVITIES AS A CONSEQUENCE OF PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES?

The responses required interpretation, but it was clear that most respondents perceived significant short-range and long-range increases in searching activity subsequent to promotion, while very few respondents indicated that they perceived no increase. However, many of those who did report an increase expressed hesitation about attributing it to promotion. Altogether, thirty-five libraries reported an immediate impact on the number of searches performed, and thirty-five reported a long-range impact, but they were not entirely the same thirty-five libraries. Twenty-eight respondents reported both immediate and long-range increases. Only one reported an immediate increase not followed by a long-range increase, while three reported no immediate increase, but perceived a long-range increase. Only two respondents reported no increase either immediately or over a long range. Respondents not accounted for above failed to respond, or responded in a way that could not be interpreted, to either or both of the questions. Substantial immediate increases were particularly notable in connection with the offering of free searches. A model that was repeated over and over in the responses was that promotion produces an immediate increase in clients, and that repeat business, and especially word-of-mouth is responsible for the gradual increase that follows.

The next set of questions attempted to examine the impact of promotion in more specific terms. (Figure VII).

A positive, but indirect connection between promotion and ultimate user satisfaction was suggested by the answers to these questions (Figure VIII). The scheme in Figure VIII graphically describes the best justification we can think of for promotion because it indirectly contributes to better quality service for the user, which must be the ultimate goal of any library service.

Twenty-one libraries reported an increase in the number of librarians performing searches, but only one linked that increase directly to promotional

VII

PLEASE COMMENT ON THE IMPACT OF PROMOTION ON EACH OF THE FOLLOWING:

A) THE NUMBER OF STAFF PERFORMING SEARCHES

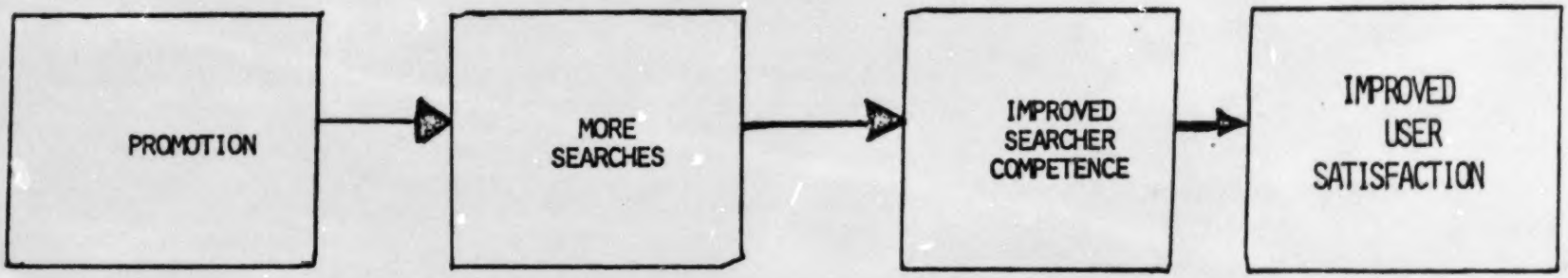
B) THE WORKLOAD INCREASE (OR DECREASE) IN ACTIVITIES OTHER THAN PREPARING FOR OR PERFORMING SEARCHES (E.G. CLERICAL ACTIVITIES).

C) QUALITY OF SEARCH PERFORMANCE

D) USER SATISFACTION

E) SHIFTING IN PRIORITIES OR DUTIES OF EXISTING STAFF (AS MANIFESTED, FOR EXAMPLE, IN THE SCHEDULING AND ASSIGNMENT OF REFERENCE DESK DUTIES).

VIII


PROMOTION
MORE SEARCHES
IMPROVED SEARCHER COMPETENCE
IMPROVED USER SATISFACTION

activities. Twelve reported no increases, and one reported a decrease.

This question elicited many valuable comments, a sampling of which is shown in Figure IX.

Even more respondents reported an increase in the workload for activities other than searching (35), although 3 reported no increase, and one a decrease. In seven cases, the respondents indicated that the workload for such activities doubled or more than doubled, or in some other way indicated a rather large increase.

The results provided overwhelming evidence of improved quality in the searches performed in the responding libraries. Twenty-three respondents indicated an improvement in quality, and nine reported no effect. One respondent suggested that, as a result of having more searches to perform, less time could be spent on each one, and the quality therefore declined. However, this was definitely a minority opinion. Of the 32 respondents reporting either a short-range or long-range increase in number of searches, or both, 21 reported an improvement in the quality of the searches. There were some respondents who chose not to answer the question about search quality, or to answer in a way that did not allow interpretation in terms of perceived improved quality, and we did not impose any interpretation ourselves on either of these types of responses.

In Figure X, several valuable comments we received are reproduced.

Thirteen respondents reported a positive effect of promotion on user satisfaction, and eight reported no effect. Again, we found that the comments, such as those in Figure XI, were more valuable to us than the statistics on the number of positive or neutral responses.

Twenty-four libraries reported priority shifts or accommodations, while twelve stated that none were made. Although there were more service points

IX

"IMPORTANT TO RESIST TENDENCY TO EXPAND STAFF SIZE AT THE EXPENSE OF QUALITY; STAFF SHOULD NOT GROW BEYOND POINT WHERE EACH MEMBER CAN DO A MINIMUM OF, SAY, 2 SEARCHES PER WEEK IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN PROFICIENCY AND KEEP UP WITH DATABASE CHANGES."

"WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO ADD STAFF IN REFERENCE AREAS FOR THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS. FORTUNATELY, EXISTING STAFF HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ASSUME THE INCREASED WORKLOAD SO FAR."

". . .WE TRAINED A LARGE NUMBER OF SEARCHERS BUT FOUND THAT EVEN AFTER PROMOTION EFFORTS, MANY OF THEM WERE SEARCHING SO RARELY THAT THEIR CONFIDENCE IN THEIR ONLINE SKILLS NEVER DEVELOPED. IT WAS MORE EFFICIENT TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF SEARCHERS TO AN EXPERIENCED CORE."

"..PROMOTION HAS LED TO THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE ENTIRE REFERENCE STAFF IN SEARCHING..."

X

"AS WE ALL GAIN EXPERIENCE, I BELIEVE THE QUALITY OF SEARCHING IS IMPROVING." (THERE WERE SEVERAL COMMENTS SIMILAR TO THIS).

"MORE SEARCHES = MORE EXPERIENCE = (USUALLY) BETTER SEARCHERS OR (SOMETIMES) DROPOUTS."

"TWO EFFECTS,.. 1ST, LESS TIME SPENT PREPARING AND PERFORMING EACH SEARCH, WITH A POTENTIAL DROP IN QUALITY. 2ND, THE EXTRA EXPERIENCE ENABLES SEARCHERS TO PERFORM MORE EFFECTIVELY IN A SHORTER TIME, AT LESS COST TO THE PATRON. WE BELIEVE THE LATTER IS MORE IMPORTANT."

"ON THE PART OF THE CLIENT, PROMOTION RESULTS IN A BETTER INFORMED AND PREPARED RESEARCHER WHO CAN MORE EFFECTIVELY TRANSMIT HIS NEEDS."

XI

"IT WOULD IMPACT ONLY TO THE EXTENT THAT THE PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL HAD POSSIBLY MISLED THE USER."

"BLANKET PROMOTION IS RELATIVELY EASY COMPARED TO CLIENT EDUCATION, AND OUR BIG PROBLEM IS WITH CLIENTS WHO EQUATE COMPUTERS WITH PERFECTION."

reporting shifts in priorities than not, (12), the number reporting no shifts was surprising, particularly among those libraries manifesting the greatest commitment to online searching. Top priority is usually given to the patron at the reference desk, but the high (if second-place) priority of online searching was noted in several cases. Figure XII illustrates the types of shifts in priorities or accommodations that were reported.

Many of the comments suggested that searchers are responsible librarians and can be trusted to set their own priorities in a way that does not result in a neglect of responsibilities. Several comments suggested that the people who developed themselves into search specialists are those who are doing a lot already, and because of interest, enthusiasm, and service dedication have chosen to do more. Often the search specialists took on these functions in addition to their regular reference service duties. Some libraries reported that the provision of CIS has reduced the availability of librarians who perform searches in covering desk hours, and that this has resulted in internal reassignments and reorganizations to varying degrees. Conventional reference service at service desks remains the priority activity when choices have to be made, but at least some libraries are now planning to appoint some search specialists fulltime to CIS activities. Libraries now are cautiously evolving increased CIS activity and are gradually reassigning FTE from the more conventional functions to it. No one seems to feel that there will be any diminution in the provision and utilization of these services in the future.

The next two questions (Figure XIII) requested information about backup.

On nearly all campuses, searchers back one another up. (46 do, 3 don't). The fact that nearly all respondents reported successful experiences with backup, even across subject areas, suggests that backup should be incorporated into every library's online program. The importance of insuring that all backup

XII

REDUCTION IN THE NUMBER OF DESK HOURS FOR SEARCHERS.

GREATER USE OF SUPPORT STAFF AT THE REFERENCE DESK.

USE OF TECHNICAL SERVICE PEOPLE AT THE REFERENCE DESK.

SEARCHER'S WORKING HOURS HAVE BEEN LENGTHENED.

SEARCHERS SPEND OVERTIME.

RELATIVELY MINOR DUTIES HAVE BEEN NEGLECTED.

SOME LOW PRIORITY TASKS REASSIGNED.

SERVICE AT THE REFERENCE DESK HAS SUFFERED.

XIII

TO WHAT EXTENT DO SEARCHERS ON YOUR CAMPUS BACK ONE ANOTHER UP IN CASES OF ABSENCES OR OVERLOADS?

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU RELY ON OFF-CAMPUS ORGANIZATIONS (SUCH AS SEARCHERS ON OTHER CAMPUSES OR IN OTHER ORGANIZATIONS) TO PROVIDE BACKUP IN CASE OF ABSENCES OR OVERLOADS?

HAVE YOU PERCEIVED ANY INCREASE IN EITHER ON-CAMPUS OR OFF-CAMPUS BACKUP ACTIVITIES AS A RESULT OF PROMOTION?

searchers get a sufficient number of searches to do to maintain competence was pointed out by one respondent. Forty-two libraries do not rely on off-campus organizations for back-up (though a few do use such organizations on occasion), and only two libraries do rely on off-campus organizations. Self-reliance is all but universal. Seven respondents perceived an increase in reliance on backup activities, and twenty-five reported that they did not, subsequent to promotion.

Our survey asked two rather difficult questions of our respondents (Figure XIV). An academic library is not an isolated laboratory experiment for which one variable can be changed (e.g. a step-up in the promotion of online searching) while everything else is held constant (such as the make-up of the staff, the nature of user needs, and the costs for library materials and personnel). On the contrary, it is likely that the activities that we are asking about were taking place in any given library in a milieu of changing situations, many apparently rather remote from online searching, but which none-the-less could have directly or indirectly affected the "mechanisms" we were inquiring about.

Hence, it is not surprising that most respondents either did not answer these questions, or answered in a way that did not really address what the questions were asking. Nevertheless, we were glad we asked these two questions, because a few of the responses were very enlightening (see Figure XV).

In only two cases was the library budget augmented to support online searching. In one additional case, grant funds were obtained. Seventeen respondents indicated that internal transfers of assignments were made, but rarely did they say from where the reassignments came. This pair of questions deserves further investigation, independent of any effects of promotion, and probably could better be explored using less open-ended, more objective (and

XIV

IF YOU DID EXPERIENCE AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF STAFF PERFORMING SEARCHES, WE WOULD APPRECIATE COMMENT UPON THE MECHANISM OF SUCH INCREASE (E.G. INTERNAL TRANSFER OF ASSIGNMENTS, AUGMENTATION OF LIBRARY BUDGET, ETC.)

IF YOUR LIBRARY INCREASED THE AMOUNT OF SUPPORT (E.G. CLERICAL HELP) FOR ONLINE SEARCHING SUBSEQUENT TO PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES, WE WOULD APPRECIATE COMMENTS UPON THE MECHANISM OF SUCH INCREASE (E.G. INTERNAL TRANSFER OF ASSIGNMENTS, AUGMENTATION OF LIBRARY BUDGET, ETC.)

"...TECHNICAL SERVICES NOW HELPS STAFF THE REFERENCE DESK SO REFERENCE STAFF CAN DO SEARCHES."

"YOU COULD SAY THAT WE HAVE HANDLED THE PROBLEM BY AUGMENTATION OF WORKLOAD AND INFORMAL TRANSFER OF RESPONSIBILITIES.... FORTUNATELY OUR SEARCHERS HAVE A SERVICE ORIENTATION AND A SUSTAINING INTEREST IN ONLINE SEARCHING."

"SEARCHING HAS BEEN DONE IN ADDITION TO OTHER ASSIGNMENTS WHICH HAS CAUSED PROBLEMS IN THE REFERENCE DEPARTMENT."

"NOTHING FORMAL--THE PEOPLE WHO ARE TRAINED TO RUN SEARCHES JUST HELP EACH OTHER AND THE CUSTOMERS OUT AS NEEDED."

"INITIAL REQUEST FOR VOLUNTEERS TO PARTICIPATE BROUGHT SUFFICIENT RESPONSE THAT ONCE SELECTED, SEARCHING BECAME INCORPORATED INTO THE PERMANENTLY ASSIGNED DUTIES. WE STILL HAVE A WAITING LIST OF STAFF WHO WISH TO BE TRAINED."

"PEOPLE WHO WERE DOING A LOT DID MORE...IN ONE DEPARTMENT TWO SEARCH SPECIALISTS WORK TWO HOURS A WEEK LESS ON THE REFERENCE DESK THAN OTHER DEPARTMENT STAFF."

"THE LIBRARY BUDGET HAS EXPANDED TO COVER SOME OF THE COST OF ONLINE SERVICES IN TERMS OF BOTH TRAINING AT THE TERMINAL AND ALSO FOR TRAVEL TO ONLINE WORKSHOPS."

"TO A VERY MINOR DEGREE, WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO AUGMENT REFERENCE DESK STAFFING BY USING LIBRARY SCHOOL STUDENTS HIRED ON AN HOURLY BASIS."

more detailed) questions than we used.

In our final question on the survey, we asked for key publications that deal with the promotion of online services and/or the impacts of that promotion. Only a small number of respondents mentioned specific articles or documents, but many people advised scanning certain journals, especially the journal Online. Specific items that were named are given in the bibliography (3,5,8,11-14).

When we sent out our questionnaire, we solicited promotional material from respondents. We received many attractive brochures, and chose to base our initial effort on the brochure used by Amherst University in Massachusets. In modifying that brochure to meet our specific situation, we drew upon many of the other samples we had in hand. We wish to thank Carol Gibbens, of the UCSB library, who was responsible for most of the work that resulted in our brochure design. (See Figure XVI).

Additional facts emerged from our survey that were not specifically in answer to questions as stated on the questionnaire. Almost all responding libraries have assigned one person to be a data services coordinator for the library, and this type of assignment undoubtedly will become a standard feature of research library organization. It was remarkable how often the number "8" appeared in designating the number of search specialists that have been developed and maintained by responding libraries. The number of search specialists reported ranged from 1 as the low, to 12 as the high. There seems to be agreement that CIS is a specialist type of activity and that it does not make sense to try to make every librarian into a searching specialist. Nevertheless it is reasonable that almost all librarians should have some hands-on experience with these systems to be able to explain, inform, and interview potential users of these services intelligently. Several of the responding libraries stated that

LITERATURE & INFORMATION SEARCHES BY COMPUTER

LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
SANTA BARBARA

UCSB Library 93106
January 1980

by Carol Gibbens
Arthur Antony

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WHAT IS A COMPUTER SEARCH?

A computer search provides fast access to the contents of a variety of bibliographic and informational files. In most cases, a computer search leads to a list of journal articles or other publications on a specified topic. Most of these files correspond to traditional printed indexes such as Chemical Abstracts, Bibliography of Agriculture, Monthly Catalog of United States Government Publications, Psychological Abstracts, Eric Indexes, Index Medicus, Computer and Control Abstracts, Social Sciences Citation Index, Historical Abstracts, Biological Abstracts, and Magazine Index. Over one hundred files, covering a broad spectrum of subjects, may be searched.

ADVANTAGES OF A COMPUTER SEARCH

1. Each search is custom-designed to meet the unique requirements of your topic.

2. Speed. Several years of a file can be searched simultaneously, reducing the time spent locating citations from hours to minutes.

3. Currency. Online indexes are frequently available sooner than their printed equivalents.

4. Terms from the abstracts and titles which are often not searchable in the printed indexes, can be searched by computer.

5. Ability to coordinate several facets of a subject, and select those that intersect.

6. In many cases a monthly update can be provided to you automatically.

REQUESTING A SEARCH

Reference librarians trained in computer searching are available at the locations listed below and may be contacted for an appointment. They can advise on the suitability of questions for searching and recommend appropriate databases. This service is available to members of the University of California community. *

General Reference Desk (961-2478)

All social and behavioral sciences and humanities topics.

Sciences and Engineering Desk (961-2762)

All science, engineering, environmental, technology, and biomedical topics.

WHAT DOES A SEARCH COST?

The library provides this service on a cost-recovery basis. Charges vary according to the database used, and are based on computer connect time, telecommunications, service costs, and citations printed offline. For many searches, the charges vary from $10 to $35. Payment may be made by personal check or through university accounts.

*For non-university community use of Medlars contact Virginia Weiser (961-2689).

each searcher must perform 8 to 10 searches per month in order to maintain cost-effective skills on the various systems.

As a consequence of the survey we conducted, the UCSB librarians no longer fear the impact of promotion. Our survey demonstrates that promotion in most libraries has resulted in increased online searching activity, but that libraries are able to handle that increase. We intend to maintain a steady and effective program of promotion as a normal component of our online searching activities, but will avoid intense promotional drives that might lead to impacts we cannot handle. The two most effective techniques that appear to be within our range of capabilities involve demonstrations to targeted groups and brochures that catch the attention of prospective users and instruct them in the advantages of an online search.

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